

# socialist

November 2006 Vol. 102 No. 1227  
£1



# standard

Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



## Brown-nosing Britain: a scoundrel's last refuge



Patriotism and  
Japan's new  
PM  
page 8



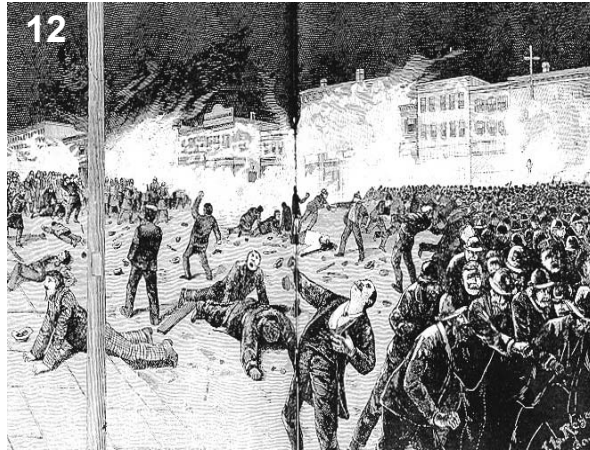
An anarchist - on  
anarchists  
page 13



The rise of  
Alan Johnson  
page 19



# socialist standard

website: [www.worldsocialism.org](http://www.worldsocialism.org)

## contents

### FEATURES

- 6 Patriotism - a politician's refuge**  
Gordon Brown wants us to "embrace" the Union Jack and to ape the sillier patriots in America by displaying it in our front gardens. But why do they want us to be patriotic?
- 8 New Prime Minister for Japan: business as usual**  
Japan has a new Prime Minister who seems eager to foster nationalism. We look at his policies for furthering the interests of the Japanese capitalism.
- 10 Anarchism in Britain today**  
We review a new book by an anarchist on what anarchists in Britain think and do today.
- 12 Upton Sinclair and *The Jungle***  
The centenary of an anti-capitalist classic.
- 14 'Terror in our schools'**  
For the media, reports of bad behaviour, assaults, stabbings, teenage drinking, attacks on the elderly and the like are daily fare.
- 15 The Axis against evil**  
The US is generally perceived as the central pillar of capitalism, yet US hegemony is increasingly losing favour with people around the world.

### REGULARS

- 3 Editorial**  
Testing Times
- 4 Pathfinders**  
Monkey business and mystery missiles
- 5 Letters**  
Conspiracies; Zionism
- 5 Contact Details**
- 13 Cooking the Books 1**  
Abnormal behaviour
- 15 Cooking the Books 2**  
Statistical errors
- 16 Reviews**  
*Confessions of an Economic Hit Man; The Best Democracy Money Can Buy; Darwin's Origin of Species; Fidel Castro: A biography*
- 17 Meetings**
- 18 50 Years Ago**  
Education and race
- 19 Greasy Pole**  
Postman's knock?
- 20 Voice from the Back**  
American poverty, homelessness, and \$100,000 parties.
- 20 Free Lunch**

#### SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

#### RATES

One year subscription (normal rate) £12  
One year subscription (low/unwaged) £7  
Europe rate £15 (Air mail)  
Rest of world £22 (Air mail)  
Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more.  
Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

#### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 November** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.  
**TEL: 020 7622 3811**  
**E-MAIL: [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)**

## Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

## Thought for food

*The food industry under capitalism is part of the problem of starvation and malnutrition, not its solution.*

Of all the ways in which capitalism means extremes of poverty and privilege, deprivation and excess, none is greater than in the production, distribution and consumption of food. According to Oxfam, 800 million of the world's 6.5 billion population are malnourished, while two billion have a diet which is lacking in essential vitamins and minerals. At the same time obesity in the industrialised countries is on the increase. Obesity is not usually the result of eating too much good food - it is a working-class condition stemming from cheap food that adds bulk but not nutrition.

Capitalism seeks the nourishment of profits, not persons. There is more than enough food in the world to feed all of its

## Editorial

### Testing times

North Korea is trying to blast its way into becoming a de facto member of the "nuclear club". The club's five officially recognized members are up in arms, so to speak, by the nuclear test this state-capitalist regime conducted. "A provocative act!" says the head of the club's senior member-nation, while another leader, not to be outdone, denounces the nuclear test as "a flagrant and brazen violation of international opinion". Like "old-money" members of an exclusive golf club, the nuclear powers have hurled abuse on the tacky upstart who dares to seek membership, overlooking how much the two sides have in common.

The "responsible" nations, so appalled by the militarism of Kim Jong-il, have stockpiles of nuclear weapons that the pot-bellied dictator can only dream of obtaining. Lest we think these weapons are in safe hands, consider how US leaders have talked openly in recent years of employing nuclear "bunker busters". And the widespread use of depleted uranium weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan means, in a sense, that the line between "conventional" and nuclear war has already been crossed. Now the US and its nuke-wielding brethren, posing as the "international community", have taken a break from their armed conflicts to warn us of a grave threat to civilization. Are we supposed to laugh or cry?

But don't imagine that we should back the nuclear upstart. Just as we have no reason to prefer a first-generation capitalist to a third-generation one, as both exploit us, backing North Korea is simply a different path to the same disaster. Apparently we are meant to choose between leaving nuclear weapons in the hands of a few powerful nations, hoping they will not abuse this privilege, or allowing more nations to have access to such weapons, at the risk of letting a thousand mushroom clouds bloom.

population. But food is bought and sold, only exceptionally given and taken. Unless people are the recipients of charity that only nibbles at the problem, those who have to live on a dollar a day or less struggle to survive and often die prematurely.

The capitalist food industry has a number of features that make it part of the problem of starvation and malnutrition, not its solution. The market for food means that only enough is offered for sale that will cover costs and yield an expected profit. Anything more will not be brought to market because it will either remain unsold or push prices down. Hence the butter mountains and wine lakes that were the subject of so much adverse publicity in the 1980s. Small reductions were made, but the excesses are still there. Something similar applies to "set aside" - the logic (only to capitalism) of paying farmers not to grow food that cannot be sold.

Agribusiness is concerned with getting the best price it can for crops and cattle with the least possible expense. Scientists are agreed that artificial hormones injected into animals to fatten them up can be harmful to humans. Laws have been passed to limit but not abolish what amounts to poisoning food for profit. A reasonably healthy workforce is in the interests of employers generally, so we

This is madness but there is method to it. Under capitalism, accumulating deadly weapons, and occasionally using them, is perfectly rational behavior. Each nation-state, representing the collective interests of its capitalists (who still keep on fighting each other tooth and nail), is in a state of perpetual conflict, at some level or another, with other nation-states, especially those on its borders. These disagreements tend to revolve around access to resources, trade routes, national boundaries, and the like. In such disputes, obtaining an abundance of military hardware tends to bolster a nation's powers of persuasion, although draining its wealth and resources.

Being aware of the logic behind the arms race is hardly reassuring, however. Once armed to the teeth, there is always a temptation to take the next step and use military force to "resolve" an issue. Trigger fingers get itchy. In the words of Madeleine Albright, "What's the point of having this superb military if we can't use it?". In addition to such hubristic curiosity, wars are sparked for any number of reasons. A weak country might launch a war out of desperation or a leader with a tenuous hold on power might gamble on a military adventure. Or in many cases, each side will show off its military hardware in the hope of intimidating the other, but neither will back down. Boom!

Our fate is in the hands of people who have no real concern for our lives. And the horrors resulting from their calculations and miscalculations are magnified by megatons if nuclear weapons are involved. We need to free ourselves from this death spiral. The problem we face is not simply this or that "dangerous" country, or an "irresponsible" leader, but a lethal capitalist system that has long outlived its usefulness.

have consumer protection laws. The consumer who is mainly being protected is the consumer of labour power - the employing class.

When ill people are taken to hospital they expect the food they get there will help them recover. Often not so. Hospitals are among the worst sources of food poisoning. Hygiene standards are lowered by cuts in staff costs. Children are also the victims of a business approach to school meals. According to the *Economist* (20 May) plans to improve school meals are causing havoc. Jamie Oliver's well-intentioned campaign against junk food has made some contracts between schools and the catering industry unsustainable. The schedule of lowly-paid dinner ladies assumes they just open packets and heat up the contents. They don't have time for the labour-intensive preparation of fresh food.

#### Food in socialism

The classic socialists didn't have a lot to say about food in the new society they advocated. Marx speculated about the future of work, education and abolishing differences between town and country, but famously refused to write recipes for future cookshops. In *News from Nowhere* Morris

*continued on page 18*



## The Science of Morality, the Morality of Science

A friend recently remarked that she had been obliged to take her cat to the vet for the third time this year. When asked if the animal had contracted some nasty virus she replied: "Oh, it's nothing like that. My cat suffers from depression." If the cat had been present to witness the ensuing howls of laughter from the assembled throng, he would no doubt

have gone into terminal decline. And, strange as it may seem, he would be right to deplore such a display of callous human ignorance. For feline depression, as it turns out, is nothing unusual, with eight out of ten vets in one survey reporting cases of stress and depression in animals left alone at home while their owners go out to work (*BBC Online*, 25 August 05).

But it's not just a case of yowling dogs or sulking moggies hungry for bigger portions of human interaction and a side order of self-validation. The social consensus has moved a long way from the days when medieval farmers were told by priests to cut the feet off their runaway pigs since, not having souls, they wouldn't feel anything. The centuries-long debate about animal sentience, more recently informed by a respectable body of research into animal behaviour, has culminated in zoologists and ethologists concluding that not only do many animals feel, they can think. "The whole climate over whether to accept sentience has changed hugely in the last 15 years", Joyce D'Silva of Compassion in World Farming told the BBC back in 2003 (*BBC Online*, 9 May 03). And thinking is only the beginning, argues the CIWF, since there is evidence among social vertebrate species of altruistic behaviour and even a crude understanding of morality.

And if humans respond to these concepts with a milk bowl full of scepticism, it is not surprising, since many scientists are also fighting a rearguard action against them. "Just a couple of decades ago, the words 'animal' and 'cognition' couldn't be mentioned in the same sentence", says primatologist Frans de Waal, "With this fight behind us, emotions have become the new taboo" (*New Scientist*, 14 Oct. In a world where per capita meat production and consumption are probably higher than at any time in recorded history, talk of emotionally aware animals feeling mean or loving or jealous is likely to be greeted with cold disdain. Yet field studies of primates report displays of sympathy, compassion, a clear understanding of what is fair and what is not fair, and instances of group punishment of individuals who disobey rules and inconvenience others. One recent study at Montreal University suggested that even mice may be capable of empathic responses.

The difficulty which this sort of behaviour poses is that modern secular society tends to assume that morality is something which comes from the outside, an abstract intellectual construct established by articulate beings who are capable of imagining all the dire consequences of not knowing right from wrong. At its extreme, among religious groups, morality is located so far outside the species that it does not reside in any known place but in the imaginary mind of an imaginary being in an imaginary universe. But what if morality actually comes from the inside, hard-wired into us? And what if it's not just us? What if other animals share some of the moral and emotional characteristics that we imagine are exclusive to humans, where does that leave our moral justification of ourselves, especially in relation to how we treat them?

It isn't just burger bingers who will start looking guiltily at their Monster Mac. There is a larger philosophical question at stake which affects even scientists, and socialists. What is the point of striving for a value-free science, if we know that in practice it never has existed and in theory never really could anyway? Many have argued vociferously, over issues like the Bomb, genetics, or even stem-cell research, that science without

morality is a dangerous and unhinged form of knowledge, yet the problem with the argument is that it is moral in itself. Thus morality argues in defence of morality. But if we recognise that forms of proto-morality are built-in to higher mammals and primates, perhaps the argument in favour of the moral dimension begins to look less circular and more solidly based.

And what of socialist politics, which is in the habit of highlighting the socio-economic forces which drive changes in society, often to the extent of regarding personal 'lapses' into moral outrage as a form of intellectual flabbiness? Does the case against capitalism and for common ownership and production for use do better with or without a moral dimension? Is it valid to say that capitalism is not only an inefficient and downright destructive social system, it is also plain wrong?

Of course, knowledge would not have progressed as far as it has if moralists still held sway, as they have for most of human history. Morality means different things to different societies, and to base one's strategy for the future upon whatever concept of morality is fashionable today would clearly be a big mistake. Yet if a chimpanzee can show the instinctive compassion of one sentient creature towards the suffering of another sentient creature, perhaps it is not for us to attempt to rise above our basic animal instincts as if they were not really ours but, literally, given by the hand of gods. Perhaps it is just as important to oppose capitalism because it is evil, and not merely because it is 'incorrect'.

## No planes, no brains

Another conversation, another friend. This one was on that increasingly tedious subject: did the Americans blow up the Twin Towers themselves? Some people, such as UFOlogists, numerologists, and readers of Nexus magazine, foreswear the genuine wonder of scientific discovery and evidence-based knowledge in favour of fantasies, rumours and conspiracy theories conjured up by dedicated charlatans who from time immemorial have always preferred the tall story to the telling fact. The 'no-planers' believe that American missiles crashed into the World Trade Center in 2001, and to explain what we all saw with our own eyes they offer the amazing suggestion that these missiles were cloaked in holographic images of passenger jets. In an article in the *New Statesman* (quoted in the *New York Times*, 7 Sept), Brendan O'Neill describes an interview with two no-planers, ex-secret service agents David Shayler and Annie Machon, as they enthusiastically describe, following the French journalist Thierry Meyssan, author of *9/11: the big lie* (2002), how it definitely couldn't have been a plane that hit the Pentagon. "Just look at the news footage," says Shayler. "You won't see any plane debris on the Pentagon lawn." O'Neill almost chides himself for feeling obliged to print the web address of a site which features photographs of plane wreckage *inside* the Pentagon, at [<http://www.rense.com/general32/phot.htm>]. The no-planers, like the no-landers, by which term Pathfinders herewith dubs those obsessed cranks who insist that the Americans never landed on the moon, are in sore need of a certain cheap and easily available piece of scientific equipment. This invaluable device, known as Occam's Razor, is in fact more of an old saw, which asserts that if several different theories fit all the known facts, then the correct theory is probably the simplest. To answer the no-planers, the simplest explanation for something that looked exactly like a plane flying into the North Tower is that it was a plane flying into the North Tower, and for the no-landers, the difficulty and complexity of an operation to get humans onto the moon would be as nothing to the difficulty and complexity of pretending to do so and then getting away with the pretence for the last thirty-five years. Perhaps the conclusion to draw from all this is that, just as

some animals are more thinking and moral than we care to admit, thus overlapping with us, we humans retain the capacity to be dumb as ducks, thus overlapping with them.

Postscript: Unable to resist, Pathfinders finally succumbed to the primal impulse and clicked on the above link to view the wreckage. The link didn't work. Now that is suspicious...

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a hologram.



**Conspiracy?**

Dear Editors,

I was astonished that the article "Reflections on a somewhat unusual act of war" (*Socialist Standard*, September) accepted hook, line and sinker, the official version of events to explain the attacks which took place on the 11th September, 2001. The contributor rightly draws attention to the document "Building America's Defenses" where the authors observe that a programme of increased military spending to preserve US global pre-eminence will be politically impossible unless there is "a catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor" but does not make the rather obvious link when this event actually occurs just a year after this document was issued, particularly when there is a mountain of evidence to support the view that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated by dark and shadowy forces very close to the Bush administration. Just another conspiracy theory? I don't think so.

Space does not permit me to outline many of the seemingly incontrovertible facts which compel one to consider an alternative scenario to that which has been peddled by the capitalist media for so long and now apparently in the *Socialist Standard*. There are many web-sites dealing with this and related subjects, one worthy of a visit being..... [www.whatreallyhappened.com/](http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/)

Allow me to refer briefly to the attacks on the twin towers. That flights 11 and 175 crashed into the towers is beyond dispute; whoever or whatever was responsible is another matter. The official version that the planes were piloted by 'terrorists' simply does not hold water. It is true that two of the

supposed hijackers, Mohammed Atta and Marwan Al-Shehhi, received basic flight training at a private aviation school in Florida but neither men could fly a 2 seater Cessna 150 without an instructor let alone a Boeing 757 or 767. Even an experienced 727 pilot has to take over 70 hours of simulator time just to be able to navigate a 757 or 7671

The twin towers were very strongly constructed and designed to withstand temperatures of up to 2000 degrees Celsius. The core column of each tower comprised 47 huge steel box columns embedded in solid concrete. Each floor was separated from the other floors by thick steel plates to avoid the propagation of any type of fire. Before 9/11, not one steel framed building in the world ever collapsed as the result of any type of fire.

The heat generated by kerosene-based aviation fuel cannot exceed 825 degrees Celsius even in an oxygen-rich environment, so why did the towers collapse? In the basement of the fallen towers, where the support columns were anchored to the bedrock, ponds of molten steel were found several weeks after the attack. What could be responsible for such persistent and residual heat, 70 feet below the surface, in an oxygen-deprived environment? One school of thought is that an exothermic explosive, such as Thermite or Ametol, was placed at the base of each tower. With these substances temperatures above 2500 degrees celsius are often reached so melting of the steel box columns is perfectly feasible. This would explain the many eye-witness reports of explosions heard just before the collapse of each tower. Unexplained tremors were also recorded on a seismograph 21 miles away 14 seconds before the collapse of each building.

Judging by another article which appeared in the same issue of the *Socialist Standard*, the views of Michel Chossudovsky are well respected. His opinion on this subject is unequivocal: "September 11th (was) a hoax. It's the biggest lie in US history".  
STEVE PRINCE, London N7

Reply:

On balance the hypothesis that the attacks of September 11, 2001 were organized by Osama Bin Laden's network is more plausible than any other hypothesis that has been put forward. This is not to deny that the exact role played by Bush is open to debate. He may have connived at the attacks by refusing to act on intelligence warnings that he believed, although his inaction could also be attributed to an unwillingness to accept unpleasant news.

Without examining in detail the discrepancies that you see in the Bin Laden hypothesis, it should be noted that many engineers do not share your high opinion of the design of the Twin Towers. See, for instance, the report of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, summarized in *New Scientist* of 6 April, 2005. Thus the steel sheets were strong but very thin; they did not have to reach melting point before starting to give way.

Just what is the alternative explanation that you find more convincing? You refer to orchestration by "dark and shadowy forces very close to the Bush administration". What on earth does this mean? This is the kind of mystical language beloved of those who believe that the world's problems have their origin not in visible institutions but in occult conspiracies ultimately controlled by the

*continued on page 17*

**Contact Details**

**UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS**  
**LONDON**

**Central London branch.** 2nd Monday, 7.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN Tel: **020 622 3811**

**Enfield and Haringey branch.** Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

email: [julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk)

**South London branch.** 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 7622 3811**

**West London branch.** 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

**Pimlico.** C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: **020 7834 8186**

**MIDLANDS**

**Birmingham branch.** Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**. Corres: David Coggan, 13 Bowling Green Road, Stourbridge, DY8 3TT. Tel: **01384 348835**. email: [djcoggan@hotmail.com](mailto:djcoggan@hotmail.com)

**NORTHEAST**

**Northeast branch.** Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL. Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: [johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk)

**NORTHWEST**

**Lancaster branch.** P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: **01524 382380**

**Manchester branch.** Paul Bennett, 6 Burrell Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: **0161 860 7189**

**Bolton.** Tel: H. McLaughlin.

**01204 844589**

**Cumbria.** Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

**Carlisle:** Robert Whitfield. email: [rewcbr13@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rewcbr13@yahoo.co.uk) tel: 07906 373975

**Rochdale.** Tel: R. Chadwick.

**01706 522365**

**Southeast Manchester.** Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

**YORKSHIRE**

**Hull.** Hull: Keith Scholey, 12 Regina Ct, Victoria Ave, HU5 3EA. Tel: **01482 444651**

**Skipton.** R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: **01756 752621**

**SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST**

**Bournemouth and East Dorset.** Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole BH16 5RP. Tel: **01202 632769**

**Bristol.** Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: **0117 9511199**

**Cambridge.** Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: **01223 570292**

**Canterbury.** Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

**Luton.** Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

**Redruth.** Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: **01209 219293**

**East Anglia** Branch meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: **01692 582533**

Richard Headcar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: **01603 814343**.

Richard Layton, 23 Nottingham Rd, Clacton, CO15 5PG. Tel: **01255 814047**.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Newtownabbey:** Nigel McCullough. Tel: **02890 860687**

**SCOTLAND**

**Edinburgh branch.** 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

JIMMY Tel: [jmoir29.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:jmoir29.freereserve.co.uk)

Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

**Glasgow branch.** 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: **0141 5794109** Email: [richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com](mailto:richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com)

**Ayrshire:** D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: **01294 469994**. [derricktrainer@freeuk.com](mailto:derricktrainer@freeuk.com)

**Dundee.** Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: **01328 541643**

**West Lothian.** 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506 462359**

Email: [matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk)

**WALES**

**Swansea branch.** 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: **01792 643624**

**Cardiff and District.** John James, 67 Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR. Tel: **01446 405636**

**INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS**

**AFRICA**

**Gambia. World of Free Access.** Contact SPGB, London.

**Kenya.** Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi.

**Uganda.** Socialist Club. PO Box 217, Kabale. Email: [wmugenzi@yahoo.com](mailto:wmugenzi@yahoo.com)

**Swaziland.** Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

**ASIA**

**Japan.** Michael. Email: [marukusboy@yahoo.co.jp](mailto:marukusboy@yahoo.co.jp)

**EUROPE**

**Denmark.** Graham Taylor, Spobjervej 173, DK-8220, Brabrand.

**Germany.** Norbert. Email: [weltsozialismus@gmx.net](mailto:weltsozialismus@gmx.net)

**Norway.** Robert Stafford. Email: [hallblithe@yahoo.com](mailto:hallblithe@yahoo.com)

**COMPANION PARTIES**

**OVERSEAS**

**World Socialist Party of Australia.**

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia. Email: [commonownership@yahoo.com.au](mailto:commonownership@yahoo.com.au)

**Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada.** Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: [SPC@iname.com](mailto:SPC@iname.com)

**World Socialist Party (New Zealand)** P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. Email: [wspnz@worldsocialism.org](mailto:wspnz@worldsocialism.org)

**World Socialist Party of the United States** P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. Email: [wspboston@mindspring.com](mailto:wspboston@mindspring.com)



# Patriotism - a politician's refuge

*Gordon Brown wants us to "embrace" the Union Jack and to ape the sillier patriots in America by displaying it in our front gardens. But why do they want us to be patriotic?*

It was not so long ago - certainly within the tormented, frustrated memories of masses of under-educated children - that we were taught British history began with the arrival in these isles of the Romans. Well at least that made it easier for the people who needed to be known as teachers; rather than work at any seismographic-type research or presentation they need only instruct their famished pupils to open the allocated history book and begin to recite from Page One. A corollary of this careless policy was the assumption that history began in Britain because it was a special place, where special people were bred. Telling those kids they should be grateful to be British elevated them from their hopeless, infested poverty through a belief that to be British was best and that all other peoples of the world should be treated with sympathy - respect could be allowed to intrude only if the others kept to their place in the anthropological order of things. It worked alright - as witnessed by the pupils' daily salute of the classroom portrait of the king and queen.

One whose portrait did not hang in the classroom, but whom the kids were often

reminded of as an icon of British superiority, was Captain Scott the naval officer who led the 1910 expedition to Antarctica. Scott's previous experience there taught him a lot about the perils in setting foot in the place and about the need for detailed, meticulous planning. He was ready to go back and this time, apart from certain scientific operations, there was no doubt about the intention of the expedition. The brochure aimed at potential sponsors put it: "The main object of this expedition is to reach the South Pole, and to secure for the British Empire the honour of that achievement". Scott himself saw it as "...an empire expedition...by a set of men who will represent the hardihood and energy of our race". Implicit in these declarations was that Scott's men would be the first to get to the Pole but when he stopped off at Melbourne on the way to Antarctica he learned that the Norwegian Roald Amundsen would be in competition with him.

## **Scott**

After landing and setting up camp at Cape Evans Scott's men experienced a succession

of emergencies which, while no lives were lost, were a grim foretaste of what was to come. The Pole party - Scott and four others - set out on 1 November 1911. They arrived at the Pole on 16 January 1912, after a journey which had all but drained them of all their resources, to find that Amundsen had got there a month before them; a black flag was there, fixed to a sledge. "Well we have turned our back now on the goal of our ambition with some feelings, and must face our 800 miles of solid dragging - and goodbye to most of the day dreams" wrote Scott. But it turned out to be worse than that. Battered by savage weather and malnourished, the five men were simply unable to get back to Cape Evans. The first to die was Taffy Evans, whose reputation was as one of the strongest in the expedition. He collapsed on 17 February and died quietly in the tent that night. The rest of them pressed on; Titus Oates could hardly walk and Scott's feet were so damaged that he thought amputation was the best he could hope for. They had no choice but to shelter, as best they could, in the tent until the blizzard blew itself out but there was no let up in the weather. It was

**Unashamedly patriotic? Gordon Brown chats to Margaret Thatcher who had claimed that 'the Falklands War (far right) transformed the British political scene'**



then that Oates went out into the storm to die and the three others - Scott, Wilson and Bowers - stayed to die together, on or about 23 March 1912, eleven miles from the depot where they had left the food which should have saved their lives. "We shall stick it out to the end, but we are weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far" wrote Scott in his diary. Their bodies were found by a search party eight months later.

### Decline

That was not the time for any useful appraisal of Scott and his expedition - of the mistakes, the miscalculations, the flawed equipment. That would come later. Meanwhile, on 14 February 1913 there was a short memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral in which, according to the *Daily Sketch*, the keynote was " ... a song of thankfulness for that these sons of our common country had died as they had lived, in the spirit which is the noblest heritage of Englishmen". During the service thousands of captive schoolchildren throughout the country were subjected to "...the true story of five of the bravest and best men who have ever lived on the earth since the world began. You are English boys and girls, and you must often have heard England spoken of as the greatest country in the world, or perhaps you have been told that the British Empire...is the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen..." How many of those schoolchildren, or readers of the *Daily Sketch*, thought back to a year before, to another service at that same cathedral centred on the victims of the Titanic disaster, when the destruction of the unsinkable liner had said something about the decline in British power, as had the humiliation of the British army by the Boers. In the near future was the 1914/18 war, the traumas of the naval battle of Jutland (when a British admiral wondered out loud whether there was "something wrong with our bloody ships") and the slaughter on the first day of the Somme offensive, which re-aligned British military history. Scott's tragedy was cynically used to blanket the reality of what was happening to British capitalism and to its people.

### Falklands

On the way southwards to Antarctica lie the Falkland Islands, which hardly anyone apart from stamp collectors had heard of before 1982 when they were briefly occupied by Argentine forces until they were ejected by a British Task Force. This victory in a far away place was remarkable for its effect on the British political scene. Since the end of the war British armed forces had not enjoyed a string of unqualified successes; among their most stressful experiences was the Suez campaign in 1956, which was little

short of humiliation for British interests in the Middle East. At home the 1970s were notable as a time of economic decline, with unemployment reaching three million. In this situation the effects of a British military victory reached far beyond the battle zone, encouraging workers to believe that although they were on the dole there was still something to be said for being able to call themselves British. In 1982 this particular delusion was called the "Falklands Factor". According to Thatcher, "it is no exaggeration to say that the outcome of the Falklands War transformed the British political scene...but the so-called Falklands Factor was real enough. I could feel the impact of the victory wherever I

## 'the destruction of the (Titanic) had said something about the decline in British power'

went". One of the places she went to was Cheltenham Racecourse, to address a Tory party rally, where she exulted that after the Falklands victory "...we rejoice that Britain has re-kindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past and which today has begun to burn as brightly as before". To encourage the mood and flavour it with a bit of Battle of Britain memories, Vera Lynn was recruited to sing *The White Cliffs of Dover* at the victory parade.

### Strikes

But in the same speech Thatcher stated what she meant by the impact of the Falklands factor and the re-kindled spirit. As the troopships returning from the Falklands sailed into Portsmouth harbour a banner hung from the sides of one of them, with advice for striking railway workers: "Call Off The Rail Strike Or We'll Call Down An Air Strike". This referred to a strike called by the National Union of Railwaymen (as it then was) which, Thatcher said, "...just didn't fit - didn't match the spirit of these times..." The strike leaders were "...misunderstanding the new mood of the nation". Another dispute involved the ancillary workers in the NHS; it had been rumbling on for some time but Thatcher was not impressed: "There is a limit to what every employer can afford to pay out in wages"; clearly, the new spirit did not involve any appreciation of the value of low paid workers doing jobs which were vital to the welfare of patients. Partly

through the Falklands Factor, the Tories swept to a massive victory in the 1983 election, which gave Thatcher all the encouragement she needed to take on the trade unions - in particular the miners. It was an example of how patriotic hysteria is used directly against the working class.

### Brown

One who has obviously absorbed the necessary lesson in this is Gordon Brown. Addressing the Fabian Society last January, in what was heralded as his first major speech of 2006 - which did not leave us breathless about what else was to come from him before the year was out - he declared that it was time for the "modern" Labour Party and its supporters to be "unashamedly patriotic as, for too long, such feelings have been caricatured as being tied up with right wing beliefs, when in fact they encompass progressive ideas of liberty, fairness and responsibility". He also raved about what he saw as the need to "embrace" the Union Flag and to ape the sillier patriots in America by displaying it in our front gardens. Brown was "absolutely right" about this, said ex-Tory Prime Minister John Major, whose concept of an ideal Britain encompassed warm beer and elderly ladies cycling through country lanes to get to evensong at some ancient village church. It was not known whether Brown was comfortable to receive support from such a quarter; in any case he is probably accustomed by now to dealing with the fact that his party is indistinguishable from the Tories, especially in the matter of showing up as flag-waving, mindless patriots.

### Malignant

Patriotism has run through politics like a malignant fault. It did not represent progressive ideas when, in the case of Scott, it was applied to persuade millions of workers that they should endure the terror of the trenches and all the other miseries of that war. The same was true when it was used by the Thatcher government, in the wake of the Falklands victory, to push through measures which damaged the trade unions and so increased the vulnerability of the working class in relation to their employers. It is not a progressive idea now, when the Blair government wields it to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with all they mean in terms of destruction and murder. Enormous damage has been done, throughout the world, by the notion that one country and its people are superior to the others. A truly progressive policy - socialism - recognises the essential unity of the human race and the urgent need to celebrate it by building society on that basis. ■  
IVAN



President of the Liberal Democratic Party and Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

# New Prime Minister for Japan: business as usual

*Japan has a new Prime Minister who seems eager to foster nationalism. We look at his policies for furthering the interests of the Japanese capitalism.*

**K**oizumi's five and a half year reign as Prime Minister came to a voluntary end in September. He tossed the keys to the official residence to his protege Shinzo Abe after a summer farewell tour that included a pilgrimage to Graceland and a visit to Yasukuni Shrine to pay his respects to the war criminals and their cannon fodder said to spiritually reside there. On September 20, Abe ('ah-bay') was elected President of the Liberal Democratic Party, and six days later the Upper and Lower houses of the Diet approved him as Prime Minister. This quick and easy process, free of public participation and the unpleasant prying from clenched fingers etcetera, must have an envious Gordon Brown shaking his head in disbelief.

## Born to rule

A third-generation politician, like so many others in the LDP, Abe has long regarded the top governmental post as his birthright. His grandfather Nobusuke Kishi became Prime Minister in 1957, culminating an amazing political comeback after having served a three-year prison sentence as a 'class-A' war criminal for his wartime role as Minister of Commerce and Industry. The US occupational authorities let Kishi off the hook, enlisting his aid in the fight against commies, but the Japanese people were less forgiving and finally drove him from office in 1960 through massive protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty. Kishi's son-in-law Shintaro Abe, father of Shinzo, was expected to become Prime Minister himself one day. In the early 1980s he rose as high as Foreign Minister, but a corruption

scandal and terminal cancer brought his political career to an end.

Shinzo Abe's own political career got started in 1982, when his father suddenly ordered him to quit his job at Kobe Steel and become his executive assistant at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 1993 Abe was elected, in typical LDP fashion, to the same Diet seat his father had held until his death two years earlier. It soon became clear that Abe would become Prime Minister one day, and this became an absolute certainty in 2005 when Koizumi appointed him Chief Cabinet Secretary, after he had been the Deputy Chief Cabinet secretary since the Mori administration.

Koizumi helped Abe tremendously by appointing him to head the negotiations with North Korea to return Japanese citizens abducted in the late seventies and early eighties, along with their families. Being at the centre of this highly publicized issue, which has become the *cause celebre* of the rightwing in Japan, has brought Abe great public recognition. He has pointed to his own hard-line stance towards negotiations with North Korea as an example of how he is a 'fighting politician.' In his book *Utsukushii kuni he* (Towards a Beautiful Country), published in July, he defines this term as a politician who 'will act without fear of criticism if it is for the good of the nation and its people.' Abe points to the abduction issue as an example of his fighting skills, suggesting that it took great courage on his part to lead this struggle: 'Many Diet members told me that I had their support, but only a few of them actually took action with me. It's a shame that there were so few 'fighting politicians,' but that's always the way it is in any era.'

Here Abe is laying it on a bit thick, as if it took great courage to latch on to an issue that already had strong public support and media backing.

## A hard act to follow

One problem for Abe in his tough-guy role, it must be said, is that he comes across as exactly what he is: a third-generation LDP politician who has obediently followed the path to power his family laid out for him. Indeed, his bland life and career probably account for the need to fancy himself a fighting politician in the first place. Abe is not that different from fellow *dauphin* George W. Bush, who tries to pass himself off as a Texan and prefers the title Commander in Chief to that of President. Unfortunately for Abe, he lacks Koizumi's acting skills. Even though Koizumi is yet another third-generation politician, and a dyed-in-the-wool reactionary at that, he managed to present himself as a rebel within the LDP ranks. He lent his empty statements the air of profundity by delivering them in a scratchy Clint Eastwood voice, with the appropriate pauses inserted to heighten the dramatic impact. Abe, by contrast, speaks in a nasal monotone, without Koizumi's sense of timing. Granted, such superficialities should be irrelevant, but in the demagogic world of bourgeois politics this stuff does matter. The ability of Koizumi to survive for five and a half years was due in no small part to his charisma, whereas his oafish predecessor Yoshiro Mori only lasted a year.

The Japanese public was hoodwinked by Koizumi's vow to either reform the LDP or smash it up in the process. Either option





From left: Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi; members of the LDP at a Shinto ceremony

sounded great to most people, and he enjoyed tremendous support as a result. Repeating the magic word *kaikaku* (reform) on every occasion, Koizumi created the impression that he would revitalise the country. The great thing about the word, as far as he was concerned, is that it could mean different things to different people. To capitalists it clearly suggested his desire to shrink the welfare state, cut corporate taxes, and deregulate the labour market, whereas to anyone not happy with the status quo it seemed that Koizumi was going to attack the entrenched power structure of big capitalists and corrupt bureaucrats. For his LDP colleagues, meanwhile the empty slogan of 'structural reform' seemed just the ticket to prolong their own hold on power.

After starting off at around 80 percent, Koizumi's approval rating did slump a number of times, but thanks to an economic upturn and that magic word of his, he always managed to get back on track around election time. His greatest success was the 2005 general election, which he framed as a simple referendum on his plan to privatise the postal service. By purging the LDP of several members who had opposed this plan, Koizumi made it seem that he was finally carrying through on his promise to shake up the party. The public, if anything, was opposed to privatisation, but the image of Koizumi standing up to 'vested interests' within the LDP looked good, and this manoeuvre handed the party a landslide victory.

### White House as a model

Abe will be hard-pressed to match the corny but compelling drama of his predecessor, whose term in office is now referred to as 'Koizumi *gekijo*' (theatre), but he may not have to rely on his own poor acting skills. First of all, Abe will face less opposition within his own party thanks to Koizumi having diminished the power of the various LDP factions, which have long functioned as nearly independent political parties. In this sense, Koizumi has made good on his promise to change the LDP, although concentrating power in the hands of the party leader was not exactly what most people had in mind.

At the same time, Abe is seeking to gather more power for the position of Prime Minister, with the US White House as his model. Along with appointing Cabinet members, Abe introduced the new position of 'Advisor to the Prime Minister' for the following five areas: national security, economy and fiscal policy, educational revitalisation, public relations, and the abduction issue. This may be an effort to circumvent the ministerial bureaucracies to better assert his own personal power, in the manner of Nixon or Bush Jr. If this is his intention, there is no guarantee of success,

and the secretary-general of the LDP's Upper House caucus has already warned that this will 'cause disarray over policy-making and split the administration in two.' What is clear, at any rate, is that Abe is keen to gather more dictatorial powers for the Prime Minister than have existed in the past.

The point I wish to make is that despite Abe's questionable skills as a politician, he may survive longer than expected because of the power he possesses and will likely expand if the confrontation with North Korea escalates (as seems likely now that a nuclear weapon has been tested there). If nothing else, Bush's disastrous

## 'concentrating power in the hands of the party leader was not exactly what most people had in mind'

term in office has shown that an inarticulate and incompetent politician can remain in power given a united party, impotent opposition, and a situation to terrify the public with, and Abe has all of these factors in his favour along with the sort of strong media backing that Bush has enjoyed.

### Abe's policies

Assuming that Abe does stick around longer than Mori, what policies does he wish to implement? In many respects, his policies carry on where Koizumi left off. Both claim to champion 'small government,' while being strong believers in the power of the state when it comes to promoting nationalism. For Abe small government above all means reducing the number of government workers and cutting people's health-care and pension benefits. To soften the blow, he promises to retrain workers so as to give them a 'second-chance' in life. One difference in economic policy compared to the previous government is that Abe is making less noise about the need to eliminate unnecessary public works or carry out financial restructuring. His line is that such reforms are impossible without economic growth, and he looks to corporate tax cuts to spur this growth.

Abe's economic policies are not likely to be popular, but he has pinned his hopes on the magical power of nationalism to deflect public frustration. Abe and his LDP cohorts have long claimed that Japan is 'abnormal' because its people lack patriotism. They pin much of the blame for this on the 'pacifist' Constitution and postwar educational system, emphasizing

that both were imposed on Japan by the US. Over the past decade, the LDP has been waging a campaign to steadily blast away at both of these pillars.

Abe hopes to preside over a revision of the Constitution, ridding it of Article Nine, which pledges to 'forever renounce the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.' Last year the LDP issued a draft Constitution, and the following sentence from the Preamble reflects its overall tone and content: 'The Japanese people share a duty to support and defend the nation and society they belong to with love, a sense of responsibility, and mettle.' The changes to the Constitution are ominous, but in some respects the LDP is merely bringing the words into line with reality. The existence of Article Nine did not stop Koizumi from dispatching troops to Iraq (although it did necessitate some verbal gymnastics on his part to argue the action was not unconstitutional). The Left, for its part, merely defends the current 'pacifist' Constitution, instead of seeking the fundamental societal change needed to eliminate the necessity of war. This weak position, which effectively defends the status quo while lacking a clear goal, makes it easy for Abe's LDP to appear principled and realistic by comparison. If the LDP does succeed in changing the Constitution, however, it will have removed a handy fig leaf that conceals the reality of the Japanese state.

The same desire to turn back the clock and dispense with democratic rhetoric can be seen in Abe's goals for educational reform. He intends to advance the effort already under way to introduce new history textbooks that cut out unpleasant facts. Abe and the LDP consider it 'masochistic' to teach students about crimes committed by the state, preferring an account of history that builds up their national pride. Abe has also strongly supported the government effort to force students and teachers to sing the national anthem at school ceremonies and display the national flag.

A dilemma for Abe in championing the rightwing campaign for nationalism, however, is that it has already heightened friction with Japan's supposed ally South Korea and main trading partner China. The influential corporate lobbying group Keidanren called on Koizumi to stop visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in order to improve diplomatic relations. In his first month in office Abe did visit China and South Korea, in an attempt to patch things up, but he seems unlikely to stray too far from his far-right allies. Abe has nationalists to thank for his quick rise to power, and nationalism is the best card he has to hold on to his own position and keep the LDP (and the capitalist class) in power. ■  
MS

# Anarchism in



*We review a new book by an anarchist on what anarchists in Britain think and do today.*

There are anarchists and anarchists. Bomb-throwers and pacifists, syndicalists and communists, primitivists and egoists, even anarcho-capitalists. Knowing to our cost that the same can be said of "socialists", we must be careful not to use what one group who call themselves anarchists think as typical of what anyone who calls themselves one does.

Benjamin Franks's book, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchists* (AK Press, £15), deals with anarchist groups today who he calls "class struggle anarchists". Which means we can ignore here the individualists and the anarcho-capitalists, but even so the groups left still have different approaches, especially as, for some reason, Franks includes "council communists" and "autonomist Marxists" among them.

He lists four criteria for being considered a "class struggle anarchist".

1. "A complete rejection of capitalism and the market economy".
2. "An egalitarian concern for the interests and freedoms of others as part of creating non-hierarchical social relations."
3. "A complete rejection of state power and other quasi-state mediating forces".
4. "A recognition that means have to prefigure ends".

Franks places emphasis on the fourth and uses it to judge the principles, organisational forms and activities of "contemporary British anarchists", in particular Class War, the Anarchist (formerly Anarchist Communist) Federation

and the Solidarity Federation (direct descendant of the old Syndicalist Workers Federation). The people around the best known anarchist publication, Freedom, are excluded as "liberal anarchists".

### Prefiguring future society

We, too, hold that the means have to prefigure the end but reached this conclusion from a quite different starting point: that of democracy in the proper sense. Democracy means, literally, the rule or power of the people, i.e. popular participation in decision-making. It allows various ways of reaching a decision but, in the end, if consensus cannot be obtained, it has to come to a vote; in which case the majority view prevails. Democracy does not mean that all decisions have to be made at general assemblies of all concerned or by referendum; it is compatible with certain decisions being delegated to committees and councils as long as the members of these bodies are responsible to those who (s)elect them.

Socialism is a society based on the common ownership of the means of life but, since something cannot be said to be commonly owned if some have a privileged or exclusive say in how it is used, common ownership means that every member of society has to have an equal say. If there wasn't such democratic control there wouldn't be common ownership, so there wouldn't be socialism.

Democratic control is not an optional extra of socialism. It is its very essence. This being so, socialism cannot be imposed against the will or without the consent and participation of the (vast) majority. It simply cannot be established for the majority by some vanguard or enlightened minority. That is our case against all forms of Leninism. The socialist revolution can only be democratic, in the sense of both being what the majority of people want and of being carried out by democratic methods of organisation and action. No minority revolution can lead to socialism, not even one that destroys the state (our case against certain anarchists) - and of course socialism will involve the disappearance of the state as a coercive institution serving the interests of a minority. Hence our conclusion that the movement to establish socialism, and the methods it employs, must "prefigure" the democratic nature of socialism.

Traditionally, anarchists have rejected democracy as an organising principle (not just the democratic state but any form of democratic organisation). The early British anarchists that William Morris met in the



Socialist League in the 1880s denounced democracy as "the tyranny of the majority" (which Morris regarded as an absurd position). The anarchists who controlled the pre-WWI CGT union federation in France favoured the activities of an "active minority". Emma Goldman in *Anarchism and Other Essays* declared, in an essay entitled "Minorities versus Majorities", that "the living, vital truth of social and economic well-being will become a reality only through the zeal, courage, the non-compromising determination of intelligent minorities, and not through the mass" (see <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/minorities.html>). As the *Socialist Standard* commented on this in September 1924: "such views mean that the great body of the people will depend upon the kindness and wisdom of the Anarchist intellectuals to guide and mother us".

It is only in recent years that some anarchists have come to embrace democracy as an organising principle, mainly under the influence of industrial unionists and council communists (who claimed rather to be Marxists). Still, better late than never. But even now most anarchists have difficulty in justifying why someone should conform to a majority decision that he or she doesn't agree with; they still seem to think that no external decision can bind the "sovereign individual" of individualist anarchism (and bourgeois ideology). One group which did accept binding majority decisions - the now defunct Anarchist Workers Group in the late 80s - was denounced by the others, and again by Franks in this book, as crypto-Leninists.

This same ideology is reflected in the difficulty anarchist groups have with the concept of "representation". What they call "representative democracy" (whether in the



# Britain today



state or generally) is rejected on the grounds that no group can be "represented" by anyone and that any "representative" inevitably stands in a hierarchical relationship with the group they claim to represent. But why can't a group (s)elect some of their number to represent them - unless you think that the supposed "sovereign individuals" who make up the group cannot sign away their right to speak and act for themselves?

Since even anarchists admit that not all decisions can be made by general assemblies or referendum, they get round this by saying that "delegation" is acceptable. But any attempted distinction between "representative" (bad) and "delegate" (good) is just playing with words. This is not to say that what is called "representative democracy" in relation to the capitalist state is ideal. Far from it, even in the Swiss cantons and US States and cities where it is supplemented by the right of initiative (of a certain number of citizens to propose laws and call referendums) and the right to recall (unelect) a representative.

## State elections

Capitalist democracy is not a participatory democracy, which a genuine democracy has to be. In practice the people generally elect to central legislative assemblies and local councils professional politicians who they merely vote for and then let them get on with the job. In other words, the electors abdicate their responsibility to keep any eye on their representatives, giving them a free hand to do what the operation of capitalism demands. But that's as much the fault of the electors as of their representatives, or rather it is a reflection of their low level of democratic consciousness. It can't be blamed on the principle of representation as such.

There is no reason in principle why, with a heightened democratic consciousness (such as would accompany the spread of socialist ideas), even representatives sent to state bodies could not be subject - while the state lasts - to democratic control by those who sent them there. The only arguments that anarchists have ever been able to put against this are that "power corrupts" and that this practice is not allowed by the constitution. But if power inevitably corrupts why does this not apply also in non-parliamentary elected bodies such as syndicalist union committees or workers councils?

Somewhat surprisingly, Franks does not condemn out of hand anarchist

participation in state elections. Discussing Class War's standing of a candidate in a parliamentary by-election in 1988 he says that there could be occasions when this could be done as long it is done in a way that doesn't "reaffirm representative democracy", as he claims we do when we stand candidates. We would reply that when we stand candidates we do "prefigure" the genuinely democratic nature of future socialist society in that our candidates do not stand as leaders or offering to do anything for people but merely as potential delegates of those who want socialism, as mere "messenger boys (and girls)" pledged, if elected, to submit to the democratic control of those who voted them in. We suspect, however, that in not completely ruling out any participation in state elections Franks will be regarded by other anarchists as having conceded far too much.

The book - despite the drawback of having been originally written as a university thesis - does give a useful and comprehensive view of the discussions that have gone on in anarchist circles in recent years. It is interesting to note that some of these have been paralleled by discussions within our party, for instance, whether the revolution is to be a class or a non-class affair, and to what extent can community struggles outside the workplace be assimilated to struggles at the point of production. (For the record, our view is that

the revolution has to be the work of the working class, but as the working class understood not as just manual industrial workers but as anyone forced to work for a wage or salary irrespective of the job they do, i.e. most people today; and that non-workplace struggles such as tenants associations and claimants' unions are as legitimate defensive struggles as the trade union struggle over wages and working conditions.)

On the other subjects which divide contemporary anarchists, we would side with the syndicalists in saying that economic exploitation is primary, but with the anarcho-communists in saying that future society will involve community-based administrative councils and not exclusively industry-based ones. We oppose the blanket rejection of the existing trade unions as proposed by the ACF (and the council communists). And we would agree with statements quoted by Franks (and have said the same thing many times ourselves) that "we exist not as something separate from the working class, not as some leadership for others to follow, but as part of the working class working for our own liberation" (Subversion) and "to the Left the working class are there to be ordered about because we are too thick to think for ourselves" (Class War).

In Franks's scheme, we would be classified as a group practising "propaganda by word" with occasional forays into "constitutional activity" in the form of participation in elections. What we don't do - and which all the anarchist groups engage in - is to participate, as a group, in "micropolitics", local single-issue campaigns. We don't necessarily dismiss all such campaigns as entirely useless but think it best to leave them up to the people directly concerned, merely advising them (if asked) to organise and conduct themselves democratically, without leaders and without outside interference from Leninist (and, indeed, anarchist) groups. As a group composed of people who have come together because we want socialism, we see our group's task as to concentrate on spreading socialist ideas. ■

ADAM BUICK



# Upton Sinclair and *The Jungle*

*The centenary of an anti-capitalist classic.*

A hundred years ago, in the summer of 1906, the American author Upton Sinclair completed a novel called *The Jungle*. The work, a 'muckraking' account of labour and unsanitary conditions in the Chicago stockyards, quickly established itself as a classic denunciation of industrial capitalism and one of the most revolutionary novels of the age.

Originally commissioned for serialisation by the radical American journal *Appeal to Reason*, *The Jungle* catapulted Sinclair to international prominence and placed him at centre of a radical social movement that sought to resist the acceleration of monopoly capitalism during the 'Progressive Era' in early twentieth century America. The dominant theme of this movement was the attempt, through works of literature, to arouse resistance to the escalating dominance of a political and economic elite whose control over the media stifled public awareness, debate, and activism.

*The Jungle* was written in a turbulent age. When Theodore Roosevelt became President in 1901, America was a country deeply divided by the extremes of wealth and poverty. The period since the Civil War had been overshadowed by the rapid development of capitalism and an ebb and flow in the workers' bitter struggle to organise the defence of working conditions against the onslaught of capital. After the mass strike of 1877, employers' repression of labour was aided by the courts and the enactment of anti-union conspiracy laws as well as the revival of state militias (later to be renamed the National Guard) as the instrument to break strikes.

Open class warfare intensified after the 1886 Haymarket incident, when police attacked a Chicago demonstration demanding the 8-hour working day. In the resulting chaos a bomb was thrown, police and protesters were killed, and the leaders of the radical groups involved arrested, charged and seven of their number subsequently executed for murder. The newspapers whipped up public hysteria against the labour movement and the violent



*The Haymarket - 1886 - one of the most notorious incidents in American labour history*

suppression of strikes by armed troops and private armies became widespread across America. Blacklisting, strike-breaking, the murder of trade unionists and police harassment were orchestrated by the business and political elite to prevent the formation of a mass working class organisation. The offices of trade unions and radical groups were often raided and ransacked, leaders arrested, printing presses destroyed and armed vigilante groups were organised by business to break-up meetings.

*The Jungle* captured the brutality of the era and not unexpectedly Sinclair had difficulty finding a publisher for his devastating novel. An employee at the publishers Macmillan wrote, "I advise without hesitation and unreservedly against the publication of this book which is gloom and horror unrelieved. One feels that what is at the bottom of his fierceness is not nearly so much desire to help the poor as hatred of the rich." Undaunted, Sinclair self-published and the novel immediately caused uproar, but not in the way he had hoped.

Sinclair's intention in writing the novel had been to draw attention to the appalling conditions and squalor of wage-labourers under capitalism by unfolding the tragedy of his central character, Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant working in the meat packing houses of Packingtown, a suburb of Chicago. But his objective was lost on the public, overshadowed by his descriptions of the unsanitary conditions and inadequate regulation in the meat processing plants. Creating a fear that public indignation would lead to a collapse in confidence and hence in the profits of the Beef Trusts, the nauseating detail exposed in *The Jungle* prompted instead the intervention of President Roosevelt and the subsequent passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906. Sinclair would later lament, "I aimed for their hearts, and hit their stomachs."

## Widely read

Although failing to accomplish his immediate goal, Sinclair remained a highly acclaimed and widely read author, whose other works included *King Coal* (1917) and *The Profits of Religion* (1918). But in 1919 he completed *The Brass Check*, which he considered "the most important and most dangerous book I have ever written" (8th edition 1920, p. 429.). The work was a devastating critique of the contradiction of capitalist newspaper production for profit and a so-called "free press." It accused American journalism of being a class institution serving the rich in which "Politics, Journalism, and Big Business work hand in hand for the hoodwinking of the public and the plundering of labour." (*The Brass Check*, p.153). In 1942 he wrote *Dragon's Teeth*, a novel on the rise of Nazism that won him the 1945 Pulitzer Prize. A prodigious writer, he completed, ninety-two books and twenty-nine pamphlets attacking all aspects of social injustice until his death in 1968 at the age of 90.

But for all Sinclair's criticism of the capitalist economic system, he naively clung to the belief that capitalism could be reformed and made to organise in the interests of the working class. He held a deep 'moralistic' view that capitalism could be 'tamed' by 'social justice' and was strongly influenced by the 'reformism' propagated by the Socialist Party of America (established in 1901) which he had joined in 1902. The Socialist Party of America regarded its immediate task as building a mass party to ameliorate the excesses of capitalism and consequently attracted members with a wide variety of reformist opinions.

Like all parties of capitalism that have revolutionary pretensions, the Socialist Party of America was never able to offer a unified response to a number of important questions and in the course of the next 40 years would be torn apart. In the early years



*Burning railyard during the 1877 strike*

the membership held conflicting views on trade unionism, (in particular its relationship with the American Federation of Labour and the IWW) entry into the War, the social reforms of the 'Progressive Era' under Woodrow Wilson's administration and the 1917 Russian Revolution.

In the 1930s the Party would split over its response to Stalinism and the rise of Fascism in Europe. But it was the government's legislation to shore up American capitalism under Roosevelt's New Deal, that finally sapped the Party's remaining support and by 1937 the Socialist Party of America was a spent force. The confusion sown by Party propaganda caused many workers to regard the legislation of the New Deal as the embodiment of the "socialistic" principles that seemed to overlap with the Party's own "immediate demands" for social reform.

Sinclair too must take a share of the responsibility for misguiding the American working class. When America entered the First World War he wrote an article in the radical journal *The Masses*, that argued that America should enter the war to defeat anti-democratic German militarism and, together with others including Charles Edward Russell and A. M. Simons, resigned his Party membership in protest against the Party's anti-war position. He wrote, "If Germany be allowed to win this war - then we in America shall have to drop every other activity and devote the next twenty or thirty years to preparing for a last-ditch defence of the democratic principle."

Woodrow's Wilson's decision to enter the war and its aftermath effectively crushed the American radical labour movement. The Espionage Act of 1917 legitimised government repression by banning radical journals, imposing crippling fines and exposing labour leaders to beatings and arrests. Eugene Debs, once leader of the Socialist Party of America, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after making his famous anti-war speech in Canton, Ohio in 1918. In 1927 Sinclair wrote an article for *The Nation* in which he recanted his view and conceded that his earlier stance on the First World War had been incorrect.

### Ran for Governor

In the 1920s Sinclair, a firm supporter of Prohibition, helped to establish the Californian chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and after rejoining the Socialist Party of America he became their unsuccessful candidate for governor of California in 1926. In 1934 he again stood for governor but this time he abandoned his own party and entered the Democratic Party Primary, winning on a platform known as EPIC (End Poverty in California). In his election proclamation Sinclair maintained that capitalism had gone into permanent crisis and proposed the utopian establishment of a co-operative system for America's ten million unemployed, "producing everything which they themselves consume and exchanging those goods among themselves by a method of barter, using warehouse receipts or labour certificates." (*The*

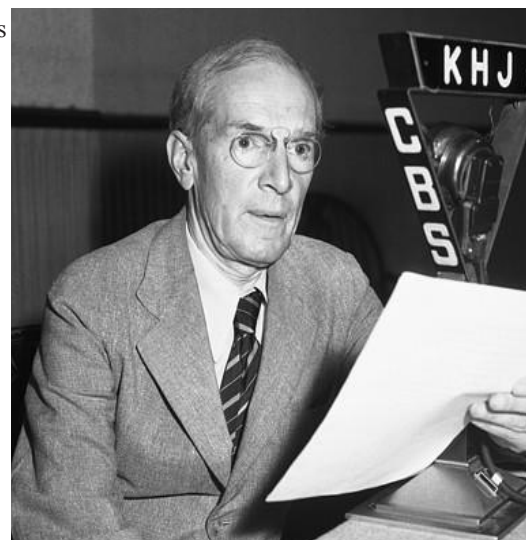
*Literary Digest*, October 13, 1934).

Although he lost the election, Sinclair received considerable support, polling over 879,000 votes (37 percent) but his candidature split both the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of America. Many of his colleagues were appalled by his action, and Sinclair's son David accused him of "insane opportunism," to which Sinclair mildly replied that he was just trying to "educate" the public. After his defeat Sinclair largely abandoned EPIC and returned to his writing.

Sinclair, like the political party he supported, was riddled with contradictions. A scathing critic of capitalism he never once demanded its abolition, preferring instead to compromise with capitalism and pursue abstract notions of 'social justice'. He claimed to be a socialist and yet for much of his life was a member of a political party that would only have administered the capitalist system. He supported America's entry into the war - and the murder of American workers - while acknowledging that the war had nothing to do with the American working class. He was prepared to make alliances with the capitalist organisations including the Democratic Party despite believing that, in the American two party system, elections were when people "go to the polls and cast their ballots for either one of the candidates of their exploiters." (*The Brass Check*, p.222.) He claimed to be a friend of the working class but would occasionally display racist and nationalistic tendencies in his works.

Sinclair displayed immense talent when he wrote *The Jungle*. The novel brought him fame and position of influence but his naivety and muddled thinking in the political sphere did little to advance the cause of workers in America. ■

STEVE TROTT



### Cooking the Books (1)

### Abnormal behaviour

The Bank of France is worried. Capitalist enterprises, it seems, are not behaving normally.

In an article entitled "*Is the investment behaviour of enterprises 'normal' in the August issue of its Bulletin (www.banque-france.fr/fr/publications/telechar/bulletin/152focus.pdf)*, the Bank notes that enterprises in the G7 countries (US, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada) are registering "very strong profitability" and that "as a percentage of GDP enterprise profits are at their highest level for decades", but that an unusually high proportion of these profits are not being reinvested in production. Some (most in fact) are of course but what is not normal, according to the Bank, is that in 2005 the enterprise sector of the economy was a net lender to other sectors, which is "disconcerting as one would normally expect enterprises to be in general net borrowers" (i.e., to be borrowing money to invest in production), adding "in fact this has always been the case up till now" and that "it is particularly

surprising to note that investment is not more dynamic when long-term real rates of interest are at their historical lowest level".

Two questions arise. If they are not investing enough, what are enterprises doing with the extra profits? And, more fundamentally, why are they not investing them?

The Bank identifies a number of ways in which enterprises are using the profits that they are not investing. First, holding them as liquid assets (placed on financial markets in forms that can be readily be converted into cash): "liquid assets represent 9 percent of their total assets, a level that is difficult to explain by any historical precedent or traditional economic approach". Second, distributing them to shareholders. Third, spending them on taking over other enterprises.

As to why, the Bank offers two scenarios. In the "optimistic" one, the current underaccumulation of physical assets is seen as the other side of the coin to the overaccumulation that took place in the 1990s; in other words, as one phase of the capitalist business cycle; sooner or later the profit hoards will disappear as they are absorbed by rising wages and interest rates when the cycle moves on to its next phase.

In the "less optimistic" scenario, the unusually high level of uninvested profits is seen as the result of investment in physical assets being more risky than placing the money on financial markets. The Bank lists three reasons as to why investment is currently regarded as being too risky: geopolitical uncertainties, anticipated inevitable exchange rate adjustments, and the threat of protectionism.

At the moment, the Bank says, this can only be conjecture, but:

"A situation where the risk premiums of physical assets are very different from those of financial assets cannot go on for ever. In the long term financial assets only reflect an underlying 'real' economic reality. These two categories of risk premium can in time only converge".

The Bank says that it is "of the greatest importance for the world economy that this process [of convergence] should take place in an orderly manner" (i. e., without a financial crash and its consequences), but doesn't seem too optimistic that it will. It might of course. We shall see. In any event, what sort of economic system is it in which it is normal to have to rely on whether or not a big enough profit can be made to get things produced?



# 'Terror in our schools

**F**or the media, reports of bad behaviour, assaults, stabbings, teenage drinking, attacks on the elderly and the like are daily fare.

This was the headline covering the front page story in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 12 August. The story was under the by-line of Linda McKee but the editor obviously thought it deserved greater exposure because the same story in almost the same words and sensational statistics appeared again on page 7 under the name of Dan McGinn.

We learnt from a screaming sub-heading that 1,000 pupils in Northern Ireland had been suspended from school for attacking staff. The body of the news item reduced the stridency of the headline by telling us that the figure of 1,000 was for a period of three years and that only 14 of the cases concerned merited expulsion. Statistically the article could have said that less than 0.047 per cent of pupils in Northern Ireland were accused of abusive behaviour towards teachers every year and between four and five of the complaints on each of the three years were serious enough to merit expulsion. The truth, however, has less impact than the sensational and it is the sensational that sells newspapers and makes profits for the self-interested moguls whose papers have such an important input into the formation of our opinions.

In this case the front page author was not only skilled in sensationalising but she was able to tell her readers how to resolve the problem. She tells us that the dreadful happenings she depicts happened 'without proper punishments' leading us to the assumption that punishment - by definition an act of violence - is the answer to the problem of violence.

## Influenced youth culture

For the media, reports of bad behaviour, assaults, stabbings, teenage drinking, attacks on the elderly and the like are daily fare. Good behaviour is rarely news, perhaps because it is much more common than the stuff the press reports and, indeed, is what the public regard as normal despite frenetic media persuasion to the contrary.

That said, it is true that violence against the aged, alcohol- and drug-induced violence and muggings have become unsavoury aspects of social concern. Now there are burglar alarms where often people were careless about locking their doors at night and a nighttime fear of errant behaviour often imposes a curfew on the elderly and the timid in many town and city centres.

We have to examine the causes of these patterns of behaviour against the background of the present way of life and to show that they are part of the myriad problems for which capitalism has no answer and another reason for considering the rational socialist alternative to the way we live.

Capitalism created a need for those employed in the production and distribution of its goods and services to possess a basic knowledge of what became known as the Three R's: reading, writing and arithmetic. Accordingly the capitalist state institutionalised basic education as a legal requirement. But at that stage education beyond the basic was all the system required of working class children. 'Their betters', the scions of the rich, could have their educational horizons widened at universities to enrich their lives and prepare them as 'leaders' of society. Giving the working class the ability to read, however, opened the floodgates of knowledge and speeded the debunking of many of the myths on which religious morality is based.

## Demand of the labour market

It is probably true to say that the capitalist political administration in its urgency to provide a more technically efficient labour force now robs the young of

an important segment of childhood. Children are forced into the educational process at a younger age and within a few years their educational apprenticeship into the competitive demands of the labour market means that they are working at school and at home for a greater part of each day than those actually at work.

Now the schools have become educational factories, with harassed teachers themselves under compulsion to justify capitalism's investment in what is still quaintly referred to as education and pupils induced to sacrifice their vital formative years in the hope that it will make them more competitive - by definition more aggressive and with fewer social concerns - in the hard world of capitalism.

Because education in capitalism is about creating the most efficient varieties of wage slaves those deemed by early audit to be a poor educational investment are rejected and stigmatised as failures. Further attendance at school in these cases often becomes a form of punishment and it is easy to see how young people, rejected and labelled failures, can build antagonisms towards teachers, schools and towards the society that has branded them.

The effect of New Labour's charges on third-level education - the mountains of debt now facing working class students who earned the right to compete for the more specialised jobs - has not yet worked its way through the system. It is not hard, however to appreciate the disillusion and alienation of a qualified teacher, for example, with a debt of £20,000 who can't get a job and finds him- or herself filling supermarket shelves.

In the wider field, news true and false is now an intensive, heavily-capitalised, industry pumping out all sorts of information twenty-four hours of every day while concealing anything that might reveal the real cause of most of the news that is reported. Without exception, all the major news media, print and electronic, promote the patriotic fervour that is so utterly meaningless and shallow; even commercialised sport, art, culture or any other human activity is used as a conduit to an aggressive xenophobic competitiveness that blights understanding between peoples. Hence, we get things like football hooliganism, so roundly condemned by those who do most to promote it.

## Political clout

The search for the news commodity is borderless and inexorable: media lies and hype make politicians celebrities just as media lies and truth can strip them and castigate them when there's kudos in a story or when they threaten some interest of the parasites who own a section of the news media. We hear how the results of a general election can be determined by the owner of a rag like the *Sun* and how governmental consideration is given to policies that might not find sympathy with some media mogul with more political clout than a million voters.

We are well, if not accurately informed; however disinterested we might be we cannot escape the knowledge that social democracy does not exist and our political democracy is at the level where political parties do not win elections; their opponents simply lose them while millions do not vote because they have abandoned the idea that their votes are of any real value.

Meanwhile, the wars go on somewhere every day; so does the competitive brutality of the marketplace, its money shuffling, and corporate swindling and corruption. The disgusting self-interest of leading politicians and public figures the swingeing poverty of social services and the application of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to the problem of errant youth, visionless, disillusioned, often intellectually deprived and now, under New Labour, left to the tender mercies of the police. ■

**RICHARD MONTAGUE**



# The Axis against evil

*The US is generally perceived as the central pillar of capitalism, yet US hegemony is increasingly losing favour with people around the world.*

**T**he double standards operated by the US are plain for all to see: the US has a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons, yet will not allow Iran and North Korea to develop their own. The lies about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction were followed by a brutal war there, with ever-increasing numbers of casualties. Moreover, the US uncritically supports Israel, and at the time of the recent invasion of Lebanon the US actively delayed condemning Israel's actions in the hope of giving them time enough to destroy Hezbollah. Behind all this lies the need to control oil supplies. After 9/11, the new Patriot Act and the heightened profile of Homeland Security resulted in dissenters at home being portrayed as traitors.

Bush and co propagate a picture of "us and them", "us" being the US and its allies and friends and "them" being anyone remotely in opposition to their idea of world order. But who, more particularly are "us and them"?

According to received opinion and Cold War propaganda it used to be simple. It was "us", the capitalists who loved freedom and "them", the Communists (USSR), who were under state control. With the fall of the USSR the Cold War was over and a new threat had to be manufactured to fill the gap. So now

"them" is the Axis of Evil, terrorists and dissenters, all standing against "democracy" and therefore against the "free" market.

However, the Axis of Evil or what's left of it - Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea - aren't in opposition to capitalism. Their rulers are merely in favour of running it their own way, in their own interests, which appear to be directly opposed to the wishes of the US. It is also a challenge that Iran and Syria are believed to sponsor terrorism, i.e. have a different view of and vision for the Middle East. External dissenters will have pressure brought to bear by the various trade organisations using economic sticks and carrots, by threatened withdrawal of aid and even by the (deliberately) weakened UN.

## Another "them"

The newest "them" is of a different order, spreading across Central and South America, including the Zapatistas of Mexico; Bolivia which refused to privatise gas and water and now has Evo Morales pushing the social agenda further; Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, the Bolivarian circles and the new People's Constitution; Argentina and the Unemployed Workers' Movement; Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement. All these reject the idea of being underdogs in a US-dominated world order.

These movements do not aim at the overthrow of capitalism but they are standing together against its symbols in the shape of the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and transnational corporations. Add to these movements the anti-globalisation, anti-capitalist forums, which have led, for instance, to US students fighting to ban Coca Cola from a growing number of

campuses. This is because in certain countries unionised workers have been ditched and even murdered, and in India village water has been seriously contaminated by Coca Cola bottling plants. Another example is the ongoing "Nestles Kills Babies" campaign against the policy of promoting baby formula mixed with (often contaminated) water in favour of mother's milk. The "Fair Trade" movement attempts to provide more than a subsistence wage to farmers around the world and give a guaranteed price even when prices on the world market fluctuate.

World poverty is the subject of a myriad of movements present at the World Social Forum, like the Brazilian Landless Movement and the anti-Big Pharma Brigade which campaigns against the big pharmaceutical companies which lock poor farmers into the buying their seeds, fertiliser and insecticides. Other well-known campaigns are those such as are fronted by celebrities like Geldof, Bono and Clinton. These latter campaigns raise the profile in a large part of the world with many people who would otherwise remain ignorant of the problems, widening awareness, interest and questioning

## The US home front

On the home front in the US divisions are widening too. It's one year after the destruction and loss of life from Hurricane Katrina when most of the residents who fled the destruction are still living "in exile" with little opportunity to get back home and scant prospect of work. Almost half of the demolition and construction workers in the area are now imported "Latinos" rather than the formerly resident "Afro-Americans" because, surprise, surprise, the contractors find the immigrants more easily

*continued on page 18*



## Cooking the Books (2)

### Statistical Errors

There is a silly argument going on at the moment between the government and an organisation called

Migrationwatch which favours tougher controls on immigration. The government claims that people born abroad working in the UK have caused "a small but positive increase to gross domestic product per capita". Migrationwatch claims the opposite and argues that in future only immigrants whose work contribution raises GDP per head should be allowed in.

GDP per head, i.e., total annual production of goods and services divided by total population, is simply a statistic; it doesn't cause anything but is a measure or reflection of a situation caused by real facts. If GDP per head falls because GDP has fallen or has remained unchanged while population has gone up this might indicate a deterioration in general living standards (though even then most people could be unaffected since a fall in GDP per head does not mean that everybody is worse off any more than a rise means everybody is better off). But GDP per head is not falling but rising. So, what the

government and Migrationwatch are arguing about is the hypothetical question of whether it would have risen faster if there had been fewer immigrants.

But how do you measure what a worker contributes to GDP, i.e., to total annual production? Migrationwatch explicitly, and the government implicitly, assume that a worker contributes only the equivalent of their wages. As Migrationwatch argue in a recent "research paper":

"In the calendar year 2003 the UK's GDP was £1.099 billion. £613 billion of this amount was 'compensation of employees'. So, apportioning this amount of GDP generated by employment earnings amongst the working population of 27.6 million people this gives average earnings per worker of £22,200 a year" ("Selection criteria for immigrant workers", [www.migrationwatch.org](http://www.migrationwatch.org)).

But if workers produced only £613 billion of a total production of £1,099 billion who produced the rest? The same statistics show that the rest is made up of profits (25 percent), "mixed income", i.e., the profits and the labour contribution of the self-employed, (6 percent), and the difference between taxes and subsidies.

Since work is the only possible source of new wealth, a more accurate calculation would be to divide £1,099 billion by the working population; which

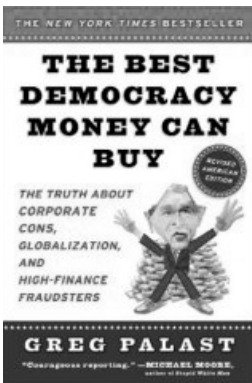
gives a contribution of £39,800 per worker. This would reflect the fact that all productive workers, whether native-born or born abroad, contribute to GDP considerably more than their earnings but what they produce above this goes as profits to their employers.

This rather demolishes Migrationwatch's convoluted calculations to reach the conclusion that "a worker must earn about £27,000 a year to make, on average, a positive contribution to GDP per head" and that only migrants earning this or more should be allowed in.

Migrationwatch's stigmatising of any worker, native-born ones too, earning less than £27,000 as a burden since they contribute less to GDP than average so dragging GDP per head down is just plain ridiculous. As GDP per head is an average there will always be some above and some below it. Migrationwatch's proposal to raise the average by eliminating some of those below it would achieve this but it would reduce GDP (since even Migrationwatch admits that any immigrant who works contributes something to GDP). A bit like cutting off your nose to spite your face. But then, Migrationwatch is only deploying apparently sophisticated statistical arguments to back up its already-decided policy of "keep the riff-raff out".

Hitting them where it hurts

**John Perkins: *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Ebury £7.99.**  
**Greg Palast: *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. Robinson £7.99.**



An economic hit man or EHM is a person who works for a bank or international finance house. Their job is to organise loans to developing countries, to help with infrastructure projects such as power plants, roads or airports. But it is a condition of these loans that companies from the country doing the lending have to undertake the building. The money, therefore, simply moves from a bank to an engineering company. But the recipient country of course has to pay it all back, with interest. If it defaults, the lending country can impose controls such as installing military bases or gaining access to raw materials.

John Perkins worked as an EHM for an American company called Chas. T. Main, but he eventually realised the effects his work was having and so he got out. His book recounts his experiences and how he came to see through what he was doing, and so gives an interesting insider's account of how US control over the Third World is established and maintained. Ecuador, for instance, was loaned billions of dollars, but in thirty years its official poverty level grew to 70 percent and its public debt to \$16billion. Nearly half of its national budget is devoted just to paying off its debts.

Saudi Arabia was brought under US influence, partly to ensure there would be no repetition of the 1973-4 oil embargo. The Saudi rulers used their petrodollars to buy US government securities, and the interest on these paid US companies to build infrastructure projects, which were then operated by cheap labour imported from other Middle Eastern or Islamic countries. But on Perkins' account, Saddam Hussein refused to play the EHM game, thus bringing the wrath of the US down on him. He further claims that Venezuela was saved from invasion simply because the US could not take on that country as well as Iraq and Afghanistan at the same time.

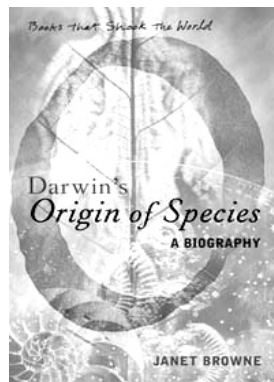
The back cover of *Confessions* has a laudatory quote from Greg Palast, whose own book (first published in 2002) is a wide-ranging look at the links between government and big business. He quotes an IMF report from 2000 which reviewed the impact of globalisation and concluded that "in the recent decades, nearly one-fifth of the world population has regressed".

One of Palast's particular concern is privatisation, which he claims has led to huge profits for some and worsening services for the many. Another is shared with Perkins, that of how the Third World is controlled and kept in a subordinate position by the most powerful capitalist companies. In 2001, for instance, Argentina was subjected to IMF-imposed austerity measures that led to soaring unemployment

and a dramatic fall-off in industrial production. In 1998 Brazil was loaned billions of dollars and at the same time forced to sell its power companies: British Gas bought the São Paulo Gas Company for a song. New Labour, with Blair and Mandelson leading the way, were instrumental in helping US and UK companies get their hands on Brazilian companies and raw materials. The fate of Allende in Chile, overthrown by a CIA coup, was sealed because he refused to pay compensation to American companies whose property he had expropriated.

Palast also has a forceful chapter on how George W Bush supposedly stole the 2000 presidential election. He's also good on the emptiness of Blair's Labour, which is driven by ambition rather than any convictions. But it's the picture of how corporations (what Perkins calls the corporatocracy) go about the work of making over the world in their own image that is conveyed memorably by both these volumes. **PB**

***Darwin's Origin of Species* by Janet Browne. Atlantic Books, 2006**



In a New York Times poll in November 2004, 55 percent of respondents agreed that God had created human beings in their present form. Clearly the Darwinian revolution has some way to go. Darwin's revolutionary

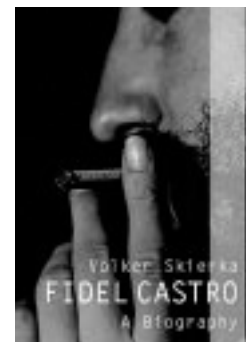
work was first published in November 1859 with the full title: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. And yet the theory of evolution could have been known under a different name. In the previous year the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace had sent Darwin an essay in which he set out the theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin's friends hurriedly arranged for both works to be published at the same time, so the theory should really be known as the Wallace-Darwin theory, if not the Wallace theory of evolution. In any event, Wallace and Darwin became good friends and Wallace collaborated with Darwin in his research and helped in the revised editions of *Origin of Species*.

*Origin of Species* went through six editions during Darwin's lifetime and he made many corrections and alterations. In the fifth edition (1869), at Wallace's suggestion, Darwin first introduced the notorious phrase "survival of the fittest." Wallace had taken this phrase from the writings of Herbert Spencer, a well known atheist and supporter of capitalism in late nineteenth century Britain. Spencer's ideas would become known as "Social Darwinism" and he maintained that society was an organism exactly the same as a biological organism. From his perspective he argued against the building of lighthouses around the British coastline because, so he claimed,

shipwrecks were "nature's" (i.e. capitalism's) way of sorting out the fit from the unfit. Darwin had never taken any of Spencer's ideas on social evolution seriously and the phrase "survival of the fittest" is at odds with Darwin's own ideas about natural selection by adaptation.

Browne ends her account of Wallace by saying that he went on to become a "utopian socialist." In fact he became a supporter of utopian capitalism. He advocated land nationalisation and was an enthusiast for Edward Bellamy's state capitalist vision of the future in his novel *Looking Backward* (1888). When Darwin died in April 1882 aged seventy-three, *Origin of Species* had truly become one of the "Books That Shook The World," the publisher's title for this series of biographies which includes Marx's *Das Kapital* (see the review in the October *Socialist Standard*). There is a slight link between the two books. Marx thought very highly of *Origin of Species* and sent Darwin a presentation copy of *Das Kapital*. But he did not, as sometimes claimed, offer to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin. Rather it was Marx's son-in-law, Edward Aveling, who offered to dedicate one of his books to Darwin. Darwin never read *Das Kapital* and he rejected Aveling's offer. **LEW**

***Fidel Castro, A biography*. By Volker Skierka. Polity. ISBN 0-7456-4081-8**



This is the second English edition brought out on the occasion of Castro's 80th birthday in August. Written in German, it originally appeared in 2000 and contains some fascinating material from the East German archives as to what its diplomats in Havana thought of Castro and his policies (not always favourable).

Castro was the leader of a guerrilla war and popular uprising that led to the overthrow, on 1 January 1959, of the corrupt Batista dictatorship. The revolution was originally carried out under the banner of Cuban nationalism, but within a few years proclaimed itself to have been a "socialist" revolution, with Castro famously declaring in December 1961: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will remain so until the end of my days".

By which he meant that he was committed to the idea of arriving at a society in which there would be no classes, no state, no money and no wages (which he called "communism" and which we more usually call "socialism") via a period of national state capitalism (which he, but not us, called "socialism").

The theory (which is still held by Castro) is that a revolutionary vanguard committed ultimately to socialism/communism can seize power without a conscious majority desire for socialism and then, afterwards, create such a socialist desire through education.

The argument against this is that it doesn't and can't work. The revolutionary minority can seize power but, without a socialist majority, can't establish socialism



## Manchester Branch

Monday 27 November, 8.15 pm

### 'CHINESE DISSIDENTS'

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre

## Central London Dayschool

Saturday 11 November 1.30 to 5 pm

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL WRONGS

1.30 Welcome (tea, coffee, biscuits)

2.00 Do Human Rights Exist?

Speaker: Adam Buick

3.15 Tea break

3.30 Recent Repressive Legislation.

Speaker: to be announced.

Room 7, Friends House, 173 Euston Rd, NW1 (opposite Euston mainline and underground stations).

## East Anglia

Saturday 25 November, 12 noon to 4pm

12 noon: Informal chat

1pm: Meal

2pm to 4pm: Discussion

The Conservatory, back room of Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich



and so has no alternative but to oversee the operation and development of capitalism, even if in a stasified form. Although they can take some measures to protect workers (and Cuba has by all accounts done this in the fields of education and health care) economically they are forced to pump surplus value out of them so as to accumulate capital and develop industry. Cuba, as a small island with limited resources, can only survive in the surrounding capitalist world through importing a whole range of essential supplies but these have to be paid for by income from exports, an income which must exceed the cost of producing them. Cuba's main export has been sugar but, to compete with other sugar-producing countries, it has to keep its production costs, including labour costs, down.

On top of that, there has been the vicious and relentless US blockade. When the Russian state-capitalist bloc and then the USSR collapsed at the beginning of the nineties, Cuba suffered dire economic consequences. The revolutionary vanguard under Castro has seen its role as to protect the

letters continued

Prince of Darkness himself. Exploring the site that you recommend (www.whatreallyhappened.com), we learn that figures ranging from Bush and Kissinger to the Pope as well as the CIA, Mossad, and MI-6 are all in the service of "Illuminati bankers" (Jews, of course), working to undermine society by means that include homosexuality and feminism. (The Illuminati were an 18th century revolutionary secret society and are long defunct.).

The question of conspiracy theories, and their current popularity, was dealt with in an article in the July 2002 *Socialist Standard* to which we would refer you (see <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/jul02/conspiracy.html>). It pointed out that "the conspiratorial worldview is certainly not helpful in promoting an understanding of modern society and is itself, in large part, a product of the times we live in. The organisation of society as it currently exists - capitalism - is certainly not a conspiracy, even if its structure means that conspiracies exist from time to time within it. And for those interested in overthrowing the system which now seemingly leads to secrecy and paranoia almost like night leads to day, a more fundamental approach is needed than that exhibited by the conspiracy theorists" - *Editors*.

### Zionism

Dear Editors,

Haven't we got enough of a problem with capitalism, without adding Zionism to the list of "things sent to try us"? Surely you know that Israel is a much more complex problem than is shown by your simplistic and extremely misleading article (October *Socialist Standard*). Stick to the class war!  
H. G. A. HUGHES, Corwen, Wales

Dear Editors,

I read Pat Deutz's article, 'Zionism: myth and reality' in the October 2006 *Socialist Standard* and wondered what was the point of it. The article tells of the reactions of a British Jew, Susan Nathan, who emigrated to Israel only to be repelled at the treatment of the Arabs living within its boundaries. This

she recounted in a book, *The Other Side of Israel*.

My problem is not the veracity of what Nathan writes (though the emotive use of the term 'apartheid' as in 'apartheid state' is obviously misleading) but your failure to cast a socialist perspective on the whole situation. While it's true that 'the price of creating a homeland was to inflict the Jewish story of disposessions and wandering on another people - the Palestinians', this kind of event was not unique in the Middle East in the 20th century. Indeed during that century the whole map of that region was redrawn, the whole geopolitics transformed, causing dispossession, population shifts and suffering on a massive scale.

The nearest you come to mentioning this is to say that 'Socialists never supported Zionism but opposed it as yet another nationalist delusion', but you never actually refer to the other nationalisms in the region, many of which, as you must know, are just as virulent and often far more savage and racist than what is practised in Israel. Finally you fail even to draw from your analysis the point fundamental to the socialist view of capitalism that the 'democracy' the system has to offer is inevitably superficial and that, when put under pressure, even the most apparently 'democratic' of states will, if it knows it can rely on widespread support, resort to repression of minorities and opponents.

HOWARD MOSS, Swansea

Reply:

We certainly don't single out Zionism for special criticism (and our first correspondent does not say in what way the article was supposed to be "misleading"). We are opposed to all nationalism and just happened to use the example of Israel, and the treatment meted out to its "non-national" minority, to show just what a danger it is to working class unity.

We accept that other capitalist states and factions in the Middle East have pursued policies that are nationalist and anti-socialist and the article should not be construed otherwise. It was basically a review of a book about Zionism and could not reasonably be expected to comment more widely on the intricate policies of the Middle East in any developed way. - *Editors*

people of Cuba from the worst effects of the operation of world capitalism. But it has not been easy, with the vanguard finding itself at times forced to impose drastic cuts in living standards. The most it can claim is to have done this in a more equal way than in other "Third World" countries, though at the same time it has sought to protect the people not just from capitalist propaganda but also from any criticism of its own regime.

Will the state capitalist regime in Cuba survive the death of Castro? Skierka thinks that the regime is more solid than the Cuban exiles in Miami (and the CIA) imagine. But already the vanguard has been forced to develop tourism - which has taken over from sugar as the main generator of foreign currencies - but, with this, have come some of the very things that the revolution wanted to remove such as servility and money-seeking.

Unfortunately, there literally is no hope for the people of the "Third World" within the world market system that is capitalism. It must go before anything constructive can be achieved.

ALB



### SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX

An index to articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

## WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via [www.worldsocialism.org](http://www.worldsocialism.org)

describes a dinner at which "everything was simple, though so excellent of its kind; and it was made clear to us that this was no feast, only an ordinary meal." Nineteenth-century capitalism had yet to invent processed and convenience food on any large scale. so we can only guess what Morris and others would have thought about seeing a future for them in socialism.

Later socialists explore what will happen to food. *Our pamphlet Socialism as a Practical Alternative* suggests that "socialism would be unlikely to want to saturate the land with harmful chemicals. The confinement of animals in the dark and in cramped spaces may be part of the most 'labour efficient' method of converting cereal inputs into meat products, but socialism would surely not carry this on." The question of meat products is controversial and will probably remain so. There are vegetarians and carnivores in the Socialist Party; their respective proportions may change, but there is no reason to suppose that either group will be eliminated.

Also controversial is the transport of food over long distances. The pamphlet

quoted above suggests that "Inter-supply of some foods would take place between the tropical and temperate regions." We can't foresee the extent to which global warming and other environmental problems may force a reduction within capitalism of long-distance food transport. Controlled climatic zones (Eden projects on a larger scale) may enable foods now grown only in some climates to be grown locally.

Spending time and effort on cooking is now a leisure activity for some and a chore to be avoided for others. In socialism, with the cessation of activities necessary only to capitalism, more people will be able to enjoy the preparation of food if they wish. Of course, some may not wish - they may prefer doing other things. There will be people with large appetites and people with small appetites. Left-overs from capitalism may persist for a while but surely not for long, as people get used to production solely for need and free access in the context of social responsibility. ■

STAN PARKER

exploitable.

Outsourcing of jobs continues to drive down wages and living standards for the majority. The crisis in the high price of oil raises the level of discontent. It may be nearly the cheapest petrol in the world at the pumps but if you can't afford to fill your tank you can't get to work. Control of the oil can be seen as a prime motivation of the White House and the Pentagon, high prices being good for them and their cronies personally. However the US public want to see their soldiers "home" and the price of gas down.

All of the above, the Axis of Evil, the terrorism, the dissenters, the thousand-and-one movements across the world seeking to "make a difference", the discontent at home, are threats of differing degrees to the current position of the US. While they are not socialist, more and more people are rejecting the idea of a world ruled by US capitalism. And that makes them more open to listening with an open mind to the case for socialism. ■

Janet Surman

## Education and the Southern Negro



Some parts of the Southern States of America have recently been the scenes of intense anti-negro mob violence. This violence was part of resistance to the attempts by the American Government to integrate negro and white school children within the American system of education. One of the reasons given why the negro should be rejected is that he is "biologically inferior" to the white, and that integration of negro and white will ultimately create a general lowering of human standards, both biologically and socially. We of the Socialist Party do not accept these vicious assumptions. The question important to us is this: What is it about the biological make-up of the various branches of the human family that prevent it from living together in a universal harmony of mutual co-operation? The answer is nothing, and this is the principle that is a guide to Socialists on this issue ( . . . )



One thing surely will frustrate the southern integrationist's hopes, and that is a slump or a margin

of unemployed. With little point in taking up the negro labour slack, surely the fervour of the Government's bent on educational integration will be cooled, and events have taught us that in such a case we should

expect an intensification of race hatred. Such events should teach the white worker that he is a victim not of any "black menace," but a victim of the indiscriminate vicissitudes of a system which is not concerned with his true human needs. The "black menace" problem for the white worker is a myth, just as the hope that educational integration under capitalism will bring the negro worker happiness is also a myth. In fact, with each other's help, they have a new world to win - Socialism.

(From an article by P. K. L., *Socialist Standard*, November 1956)

## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

**The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds**

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



# Postman's knock?

"Devotees of conspiracy theories could be excused for desecrating some determined backroom manoeuvring to ensure so swift a climb up the Greasy Pole"

The next time a flood of junk mail and red-printed bills comes through the front door do not, as it were, wish you could kill the messenger. Be aware that the friendly local postie may one day be Prime Minister of Great Britain or, even more distressingly, Leader of the Labour Party. Such an event may be heartening to anyone who is sustained by a conviction that this is a great land of opportunity and that capitalism is the finest arrangement of affairs as it allows anyone, no matter how humble their origins, to rise by their own abilities up to the highest points in society where they can look down on those whose mail they once delivered.

For example there is Alan Johnson, whose mother died when he was 12, four years after his father had abandoned the family. It looked as if he would be placed in a children's home but his sister, although only 15, persuaded their social worker that she could care for both of them. Living where the Westway flyover now belches noise and fumes, Johnson went to a local grammar school where he did not get his name onto the varnished honours board; in fact he says the school were "glad to see the back" of him. He took a job as a shelf-filler at Tescos but a problem about his lunch break put an end to that; he already had a child so he moved to Slough, to work as a postman. That led to him being elected as a local trade union official. A long time after life in a council house under the Westway and then in John Betjeman's favourite Buckinghamshire town he won a seat in the House of Commons. A few minor ministerial jobs developed into a place in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Education. At this year's Labour Party conference, among the pushing and shoving, the arm twisting and back stabbing, Johnson was spoken of as a challenger for the Leadership but he seemed to lose his appetite for the job - in spite of setting up websites with names like Johnson4leader.com.



Johnson: "never a Trot, or a semi-Trot. I was never, ever a Trot."

## Conspiracy?

Devotees of conspiracy theories could be excused for desecrating some determined backroom manoeuvring to ensure so swift a climb up the Greasy Pole. Johnson's constituency - Hull East and Hessle - was previously held by Stuart Randall, who had started out as an apprentice electrician before blossoming into a computer expert - which did not prevent a parliamentary journalist describing him as "nondescript". Randall resigned from the Commons in 1997, allowing Johnson to take over a rock solid Labour majority and Randall to be shuffled off to the House of Lords. Then there was the matter of Johnson's promotion in September 2004 to his first Cabinet job, as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (where he could start work on harassing Incapacity Benefit claimants back to work). The previous occupant of this job was Andrew Smith, who obligingly decided that he needed to spend more time with his family and with his constituency of Oxford East. Perhaps he was alarmed by the slashing of his 2001 majority of over 10,000 votes down to 963 in 2005. And perhaps Johnson's promotion in Smith's place was not unconnected with the fact that, before he got into Parliament, he had been the only member of Labour's NEC to support the new Leader Blair in his determination to get rid of Clause Four.

## Tuition Fees

Like many New Labour leaders, Johnson shows some embarrassment about his past, about those carefree days in opposition when a budding politician could say almost anything, join almost any organisation, provided it seemed radical and

exciting. Interviewed in the *Observer Magazine* (17 September), he insisted that "the first thing about me is I was never a Trot, or a semi-Trot. I was never, ever a Trot." But he did not then go on to admit that he was once a branch official in the Communist Party. Of course he has put all that nonsense behind him now that he is in the serious business of government. His record of support for Blair is unblemished - so pure that when he was the Minister of State for

Further and Higher Education under Charles Clarke he played what Tony Blair later described as "a vital role in the successful introduction of variable tuition fees during the last parliament". This mannered praise refers to the fierce battle the government had to endure before they were able to bludgeon the measure through Parliament. In that conflict Johnson's smooth negotiating talents were crucial alongside Clarke's belligerence. It was, Johnson said, "...a charm offensive. I was the charm and Clarke was offensive".

This joke may not have gone down well with students and their families who struggle through the time at university and then emerge with the right to wear an academic gown and to pay off a substantial debt. Johnson offers this as justification for his attitude: "If I thought it was going to damage working-class kids, I wouldn't have backed it". Another way of putting this feebly circular case would be to argue that the very fact he had backed the tuition fees must mean that they did not damage anyone; it is a style often used by Tony Blair to justify indefensible actions such as the war in Iraq. In any case Johnson's attitude is rather at variance with his account of how his daughter was treated by the education system. In an area which still had grammar schools she failed her 11 Plus and was placed in a comprehensive school: "She was very bright but, well, probably life chances were lost then...So am I bitter about selection? Yes. I've seen what it does to kids". But he does not seem to be "bitter" about his support for the proposals to set up "trust" schools which, however words are twisted and whatever promises are made, are intended to operate selection policies which can cost the pupils "life chances".

## Claptrap

On other issues Johnson has solidly supported the government - on ID cards, the war in Iraq, foundation hospitals, the "anti-terrorism" laws. And there will be many more examples, as he strives to promote his career through expressed loyalty to the government. When he was appointed Secretary of State for Education, the postie who delivers the mail to his office brought a long letter from Blair which set out the tasks ahead of him: "...build on our unprecedented record of economic achievement...ensure the long term security and prosperity of our country and its people...deliver real improvements for ordinary hard working families and to underline our Government's commitment to social justice through policies to expand opportunity and tackle the most deep seated causes of social exclusion". At the very end of the letter Blair slips a bit of reality into the clap trap: "Your plans will, of course, need to be set against the background of lower growth in funding than in recent years". One symptom of that reality is that there are 60,000 children in care in this country who are, according to Johnson, treated "appallingly". This is after nine years of a Labour government presiding over the crises and failures of capitalism. How does the ex-postie, with all his talents for smoothing over uncomfortable facts, explain that away? ■

IVAN

# Voice from the Back



## Land of the Free?

The following report from Washington paints a dreadful picture of modern capitalism.

"In the world's biggest economy, one in eight Americans and almost one in four blacks lived in poverty last year, the US Census Bureau said on Tuesday, releasing a figure almost unchanged from 2004" (*Reuter*, 29 August). The report went on to say: "In all, some 37 million Americans lived below the poverty line, defined as having an annual income around \$10,000 (£5,300) for an individual or \$20,000 (£10,600) for a family of four." 200 quid a week for a family of four, and they wonder why they have a crime problem?"

## Homeless in Britain?

The Department for Communities and Local Government announced that the number of homeless families in England had dropped to 19,430 between June and April this year, down 29 percent on the same period in 2005, but charities have queried these figures. "There are as many as 380,000 hidden homeless people, predominately single, in Britain living out of sight," says Duncan Scrubsole, head of policy and strategy at Crisis" (*Inside Housing*, 15 September). Adam Sampson, the chief executive of Shelter, also queries the government's figures.



"Any drop in new cases is to be welcomed, provided this is brought about by genuine work to prevent people from losing their homes in

the first place, rather than preventing them from registering to get the help they need" (*Times*, 19 September). Anyone taking the government figures at face

value, should remember the old saying "figures don't lie, but liars can figure."

## Fat Cat Britain

When the Labour Party came to power we were told "things can only get better" and so they have - for the super rich. "A global survey of the lists of the wealthiest people in 27 leading countries shows that Britain and Switzerland have by far the biggest communities of foreign-born super-rich in the world. Switzerland, with its reputation for banking secrecy and strict regulations, has long been regarded as a magnet for multi-millionaires. But Britain, with the special attraction of tax incentives for billionaires from overseas, is fast catching up as a new refuge for the rich" (*Sunday Times*, 24 September). Britain now has more billionaires per head of its population than America. Was this what members of the working class envisaged on election day when they sang "things can only get better"?

## Interested in Interest?

The Koran prohibits something called *riba*, loosely translated as interest and this has hindered the development of capitalism. Something

similar happened in medieval times when the Christians banned usury, but the theologian soon found a way around that and now we have thriving banks in the Vatican. Islam theology may have taken a little longer but now they have joined the capitalist bandwagon. "Islamic banking scholars have found ways of accommodating their philosophical abhorrence of money as a commodity with the need to create financing tools. Typically, this involves converting interest into a rent or a profit share" (*Times*, 30 September). The Koran may hold sway in the mosque, but outside in the real world capitalism dictates.



## A Fistful Of Dollars

Being homeless in Britain may be awful, but think how much worse to be sleeping rough in a Russian winter. That is a problem that does not confront the Russian



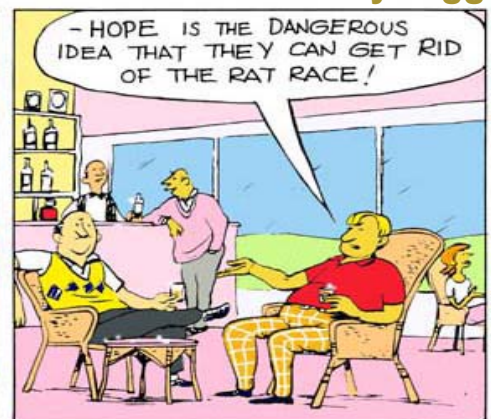
Tariko

billionaire Roustam Tariko to judge by this item. "At a palace in St Petersburg, which has been converted into a disco for the night by Moscow's most fashionable party organisers, the vodka flows and a New York disco diva sings Thank You for the Music, while ballet dancers pirouette around her. ... Roustam Tariko, the man picking up the \$3 million (£1.6 million) tab for the party, turns to me: 'People like you are already tired of \$100,000 parties. They are nothing special for you'" (*Times*, 7 October). If a Moscow winter proves too severe he can always flee to his house in New York or Sardina, an escape that is impossible for the Russian homeless.

## A Handful Of Pennies

It is reckoned that 1.9 million children under the age of five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases and that the means of saving their lives only cost a couple of pence. "The result, according to the World Health Organization (WHO): 3 million people a year still die from diarrhoeal complications, including 1.9 million children under the age of five, or 17% of the estimated deaths in that age group" (*Time*, 16 October). All that is required is a large pinch of salt and a fistful of sugar dissolved in a jug of clean water, but in the crowded cities and remote areas of the world's poorest this has proved impossible. Capitalism breeds poverty and ignorance and makes this madness possible. The establishment of world socialism will almost immediately save these 3 million people from premature death.

## Free Lunch



by Rigg

ISSN 0037 8259